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Economic and Social Council

Provisional

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General segment

Provisional summary record of the 46th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 21 July 2004, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Koonjul (Vice-President) ..... (Mauritius)
later: Mr. Penjo (Vice-President) ..... (Azerbaijan)

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In the absence of Ms. Risa (Finland), Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Economic and environmental questions (*continued*)

(a) Sustainable development (*continued*)

1. **The President** recalled that, at its 16th meeting, the Council had decided to invite the World Deserts Foundation, an intergovernmental organization, to participate as an observer in the deliberations of the Council and of its subsidiary organs.

2. **Mr. Rahmani** (Observer for the World Deserts Foundation) said that the Foundation had been created under the high patronage of the Presidents of Algeria, South Africa and Nigeria. Its founding members came from all continents and included such notable persons as Ms. Rigoberta Menchu, Nobel Laureate.

3. After referring to the authors, explorers and religious leaders who had celebrated the spirituality of the desert, he said that the common perception that the desert was synonymous with emptiness, drought and death was false. Its inhabitants had, over the centuries, been able to make of the desert not only a thing of beauty but a measure of the immensity of infinity. The mission of the Foundation was to ensure the preservation and protection of the world's deserts and to promote their cultural and biological diversity.

4. The desert regions of the world must be recognized as specific sites for development and full partners in the quest for sustainable development. The desertification which was aggravating poverty was no longer confined to the inhabitants of arid zones; under the effect of climate change, it was affecting people everywhere, including in the United States of America, Australia and South Africa. The movement of people from drought-affected areas of the Sahel was adding to tensions among the people of Ghana, Nigeria and the Maghreb. Paragraph 23 of the Millennium Declaration had rightly underscored the need for full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification.

5. He called for affirmative action consisting of financing and suitable protection policies for deserts. While deserts abounded in such resources as salt, biodiversity, natural gas and petroleum, seldom were the profits accruing from their exploitation by foreign businesses reinvested in desert regions.

6. He also called for the diversification of production: when the scarce natural resources of desert ecosystems were over-exploited, desert communities became poorer. New forms of local governance should be developed to ensure collaborative management by stakeholders, also bearing in mind the transnational character of deserts. The preparation of an inventory and classification of desert ecosystems would assist in conservation efforts. Similarly, national policies and international initiatives should identify the specific problems relating to sustainable development in the areas concerned and devote to them sufficient human, financial and institutional resources. In that connection, the Foundation was eager to cooperate with the Commission on Sustainable Development, since there was a danger that unethical economic growth and unbridled tourism would destroy the natural and cultural heritage that the deserts represented.

7. His organization sought to act on behalf of desert inhabitants and to achieve an active synergy in the sharing of expertise and knowledge about that heritage of mankind.

8. **Mr. Coultas** (Observer for Rotary International) apologized to participants on behalf of the President of Rotary International, who had not been able to attend the session. His organization, which was celebrating its 100th anniversary, was working to eradicate polio and HIV/AIDS and to encourage water supply and sanitation projects around the world. It remained committed to literacy, especially education of the girl child. He assured the Council of the commitment of Rotary to working with the United Nations system towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

9. **The President** said that Rotary International had consistently supported and participated in the work of the United Nations system since the San Francisco Conference in 1945. It was currently accredited to the United Nations offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Rome and Nairobi. Recently, Rotary had appointed representatives to the regional commissions and should be commended for 100 years of outstanding work. Rotary had been instrumental in the founding of UNESCO and had contributed to the drafting of that agency's Constitution in 1946. In collaboration with its

global partners (UNICEF and WHO), it had helped to immunize more than 2 billion children in 122 countries against polio.

Coordination, programme and other questions (*continued*)

(f) Ad hoc advisory groups on African countries emerging from conflict

10. **Mr. Al-Mahmoud** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolutions E/2004/L.30, E/2004/L.31 and E/2004/L.29.

11. *Mr. Penjo (Azerbaijan), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Social and human rights questions (*continued*)

(b) Social development

12. **Mr. Ndimeni** (Observer for South Africa) introduced draft resolution E/2004/L.27 entitled "Preparations for the forty-third session of the Commission for Social Development" and revised paragraph 3 to read "*Further decides* to convene high-level plenary meetings of the General Assembly ...".

(e) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

13. **The President** invited the Council to take action on draft decision E/2004/L.19 entitled "Enlargement of the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees", which had been submitted by the delegations of Ghana and Romania. If he heard no objections, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the draft decision and recommend it to the General Assembly for action.

14. *It was so decided.*

(i) Genetic privacy and non-discrimination

15. **The President** invited the Council to take action on the revised draft resolution E/2004/L.13/Rev.1, entitled "Genetic privacy and non-discrimination". If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt it.

16. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.